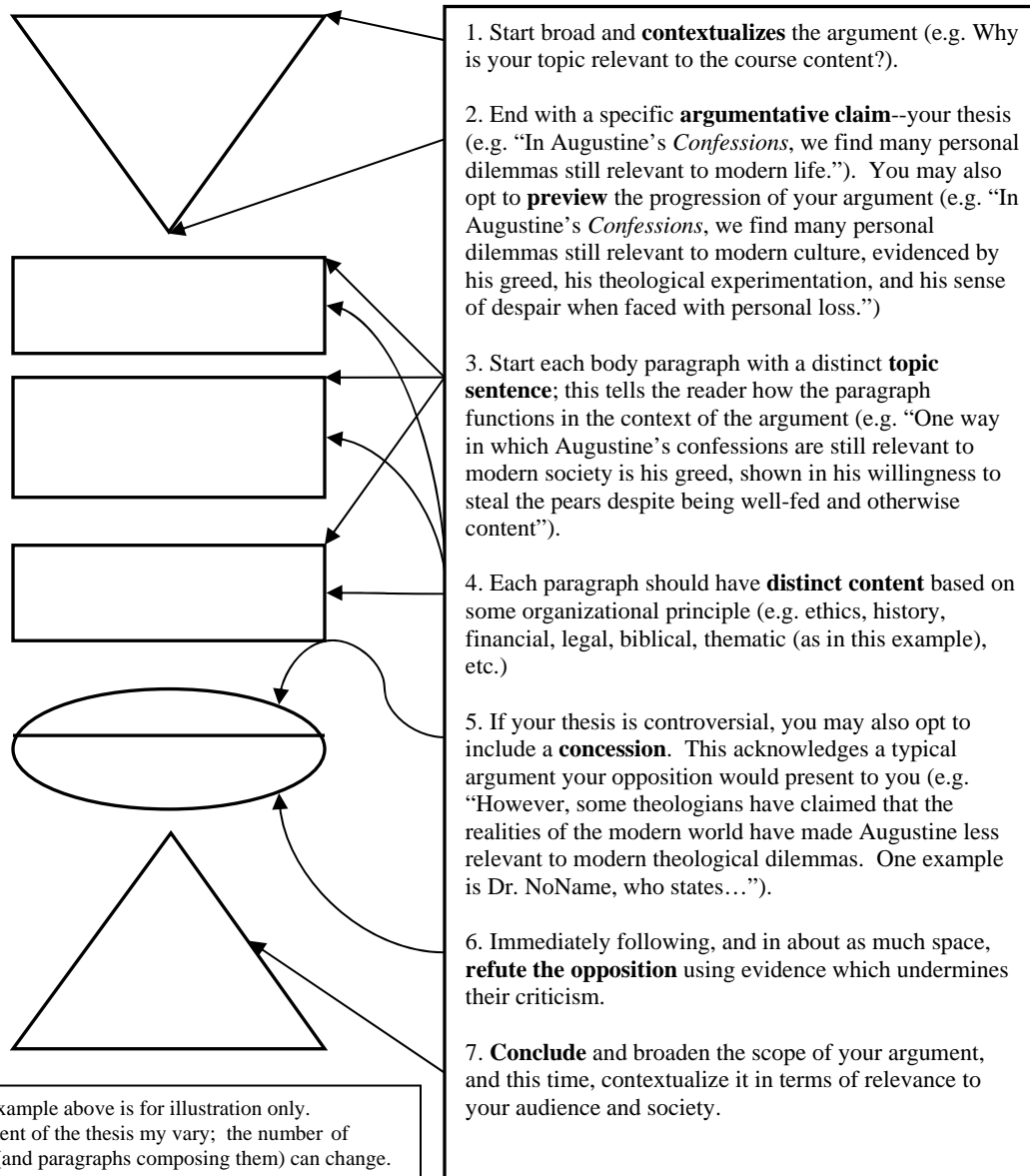
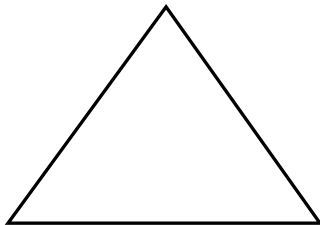
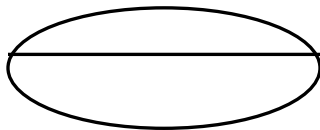
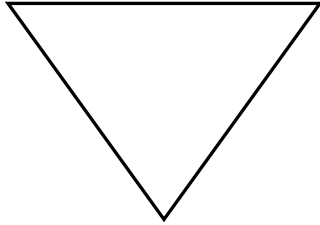


Argument structure: *The Aristotelian argument*

The Aristotelian argument is the framework upon which most academic, thesis-driven writing is based. You can use this template any time you need to take a position on a topic.* Before getting started, make sure that your thesis is *argumentative* and non-obvious. When determining how to support your thesis, try to group all of your supporting evidence into distinct piles which have thematic similarities. Finally, develop each claim in its own section of text, making sure that each point is proportionate to the others. The back of this handout contains a template you can use to get started.



*The example above is for illustration only. Placement of the thesis may vary; the number of points (and paragraphs composing them) can change.



Relevance & Context:

Thesis:

Topic Sentence 1:

Supporting claims:

Topic Sentence 2:

Supporting claims:

Topic Sentence 3:

Supporting claims:

Concession:

Refutation:

Context & Relevance:

The Aristotelian Argument

The following example illustrates a typical Aristotelian argument. This rhetorical form differs from the neutral summary and critical review in the fact that it addresses an *issue*, not a source text. Aristotelian arguments...

- start by establishing the context for the issue, telling the reader why the issue is timely and relevant to its audience.
- establish the problem that results from the current situation.
- make a debatable claim (thesis) that solves the problem providing why and how to close the introduction.
- reinforce the claim with a clear controlling idea (point) to begin each body paragraph (PEAL).
- include a concession and refutation just prior to the concluding paragraph.
- conclude by briefly restating the main claims made in the body, followed by imploring the audience to take a specific action.

Last month, in a high-profile meeting at the white house, representatives from the United Nations, the federal government, and faith-based non-governmental organizations (FBNGOs) listened while Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, threatened a withdrawal of funding for faith-based AIDS initiatives. The reason? Faith-based organizations had failed to provide adequate services due to their ideology. This is not a new phenomenon. Since 1996, religious organizations have been eligible for federal funding to support their social service programs—despite mixed results and vocal opposition from the left decrying such funding as a breach of the separation of church and state. Therefore, to address this problem, it is time to consider passing tougher legislation overseeing federal funding of FBNGOs based on their potential illegality, ineffectiveness, and fiscal irresponsibility.

Federal funding of faith-based social programs has long been considered illegal by some critics. Opponents to the legislation, such as Barry W. Lynn, Director of the watchdog group Americans United for Separation of Church and State, lament that “no American should be required to support religious discrimination through his or her taxes” (33). Such critics view funding of FBNGOs as a *de facto* endorsement of these organizations, and argue that there are numerous secular alternatives in place.

Comment [PS1]: Here, I establish the context of the debate and show that it is relevant now.

Comment [PS2]: Here, I establish the problem.

Comment [PS3]: Here is my claim.

Comment [PS4]: And here is my preview of my organization.

Comment [PS5]: Here, I establish the first point in the progression as indicated above: illegality.

Comment [PS6]: Here, I establish the credibility of my source because they are not well-known to my audience by weaving in the quote.

Comment [PS7]: Cite all sources using MLA

Similarly, opponents claim that FBNGOs are less effective at delivering services than their secular counterparts. In fact, faith-based groups typically fail because they lack the infrastructure, experience and long-term approach of other organizations. In his article from *Christian Century*, “Thanks, but No Thanks,” Mark Chaves recounts that, “[it] is no accident that congregations’ most significant social service collaborations are with organizations, like homeless shelters and Habitat for Humanity” (7). To the extent that FBNGOs succeed at all, it is often due to the strengths of larger, secular organizations.

Comment [PS8]: Transition statement.

Comment [PS9]: A clear indication of point 2.

Comment [PS10]: I manipulated the quote, so I indicate this in square brackets.

Finally, FBNGOs’ initiatives may be fiscally irresponsible. Because they lack many of the resources and distribution networks of larger, secular organizations, FBNGOs are often much less efficient, spending money on infrastructure instead of those in need. They also spend too much on too few, as supported by a 2006 study by Deryke Belshaw, Director of the Institute for Development Research at Oxford University, who argues that “accepting the continuing dependence of a minority of communities on external aid, with no resources left to be rolled into untouched communities, is depressingly common behavior” (45), among FBNGOs.

Comment [PS11]: Another transition.

Comment [PS12]: An explicit mention of the third point.

Comment [S13]: The parenthetical citation immediately appears after the quotation, followed by a comma when placed in the middle of a sentence.

This is not to say that such groups have done no good. Even critics acknowledge that faith-based organizations are able to make a great impact on individuals in their community that are in need. However, such initiatives are often hyper-local and short term, unlike the situations which the federal funding seeks to address: long-term projects aimed at diverse communities.

Comment [PS14]: Here is my concession to my opposition. (Ideally, this would come from research and be cited.)

Comment [PS15]: My transition to the refutation. This, too, should be backed with evidence.

Comment [PS16]: The refutation.

Thus, given that FBNGOs are of questionable legal standing, ineffective and wasteful, now is the time to implement greater restrictions on federal funding of such organizations. Due to the current state of the federal budget, time and money can no longer be wasted on such organizations.

Comment [PS17]: In this conclusion, I re-summarize my main points, issue a call to action, and re-emphasize the urgent need for action.

Developing Strong Claim Statements

The main claim must be debatable

An argumentative piece of writing must begin with a debatable claim statement. In other words, the claim must be something that people could reasonably have differing opinions on. If your claim is something that is generally agreed upon or accepted as fact then it is not a solid claim statement. State your claim with **logos** (sound reasoning: induction, deduction), **pathos** (balanced emotional appeal), and **ethos** (author credibility).

Example of a non-debatable claim statement:

Pollution is bad for the environment.

This claim statement is not debatable. First, the word *pollution* means that something is bad or negative in some way. Further, all studies agree that pollution is a problem; they simply disagree on the impact it will have or the scope of the problem. No one could reasonably argue that pollution is good.

Example of a debatable claim statement:

At least 25 percent of the federal budget should be spent on limiting pollution.

This is an example of a debatable claim because reasonable people could disagree with it. Some people might think that this is how we should spend the nation's money. Others might feel that we should be spending more money on education. Still others could argue that corporations, not the government, should be paying to limit pollution.

Another example of a debatable claim statement:

America's anti-pollution efforts should focus on privately owned cars.

In this example there is also room for disagreement between rational individuals. Some citizens might think focusing on recycling programs rather than private automobiles is the most effective strategy.

The claim needs to be narrow

Although the scope of your paper might seem overwhelming at the start, generally the narrower the claim the more effective your argument will be. Your claim must be supported by evidence. The broader your claim is, the more evidence you will need to convince readers that your position is right.

Example of a claim that is too broad:

Drug use is detrimental to society.

There are several reasons this statement is too broad to argue. First, what is included in the category "drugs"? Is the author talking about illegal drug use, recreational drug use (which might include alcohol and cigarettes), or all uses of medication in general? Second, in what ways are drugs detrimental? Is drug use causing deaths (and is the author equating deaths from overdoses and deaths from drug related violence)? Is drug use changing the moral climate or causing the economy to decline? Finally, what does the author mean by "society"? Is the author referring only to America or to the global population? Does the author make any distinction between the effects on children and adults? There are just too many questions that the claim leaves open. The author could not cover all of the topics listed above, yet the generality of the claim leaves all of these possibilities open to debate.

Example of a narrow or focused claim:

Illegal drug use is detrimental because it encourages gang violence.

In this example the topic of drugs has been narrowed down to illegal drugs and the detriment has been narrowed down to gang violence. This is a much more manageable topic.

Qualifiers such as "typically," "generally," "usually," or "on average" also help to limit the scope of your claim by allowing for the almost inevitable exception to the rule.

Types of Claims

Claims typically fall into one of four categories. Thinking about how you want to approach your topic, in other words what type of claim you want to make, is one way to focus your thesis on one particular aspect of your broader topic.

Claims of fact or definition: These claims argue about what the definition of something is or whether something is a settled fact.

i.e. *What some people refer to as global warming is actually nothing more than normal, long-term cycles of climate change.*

Claims of cause and effect: These claims argue that one person, thing, or event caused another thing or event to occur.

i.e. *The popularity of SUV's in America has caused pollution to increase.*

Claims about value: These are claims made of what something is worth, whether we value it or not, how we would rate or categorize something.

i.e. *Global warming is the most pressing challenge facing the world today.*

Claims about solutions or policies: These are claims that argue for or against a certain solution or policy approach to a problem.

i.e. *Instead of drilling for oil in Alaska we should be focusing on ways to reduce oil consumption, such as researching renewable energy sources.*

Which type of claim is right for your argument?

Which type of claim you use for your argument will depend on your position and knowledge of the topic, your audience, and the context of your paper. Even if you start with one type of claim you probably will be using several within the paper. Perhaps the biggest mistake people make in writing an argumentative essay is to substitute their opinions for facts. Remember that each claim you make must be supported by solid evidence if your argument is to hold up to counter claims and objections. In addition, all counter claims should be backed with solid evidence as well. Although in an argumentative essay you don't have to win the reader over to your side, your objective at the least should be to persuade them to "agree to disagree" with your position and accept it as another point of view that merits further thought and discussion.

This documented is an adaptation of the following sources:

http://www.lanec.edu/sites/default/files/trio/writing_an_argumentative_essay.pdf

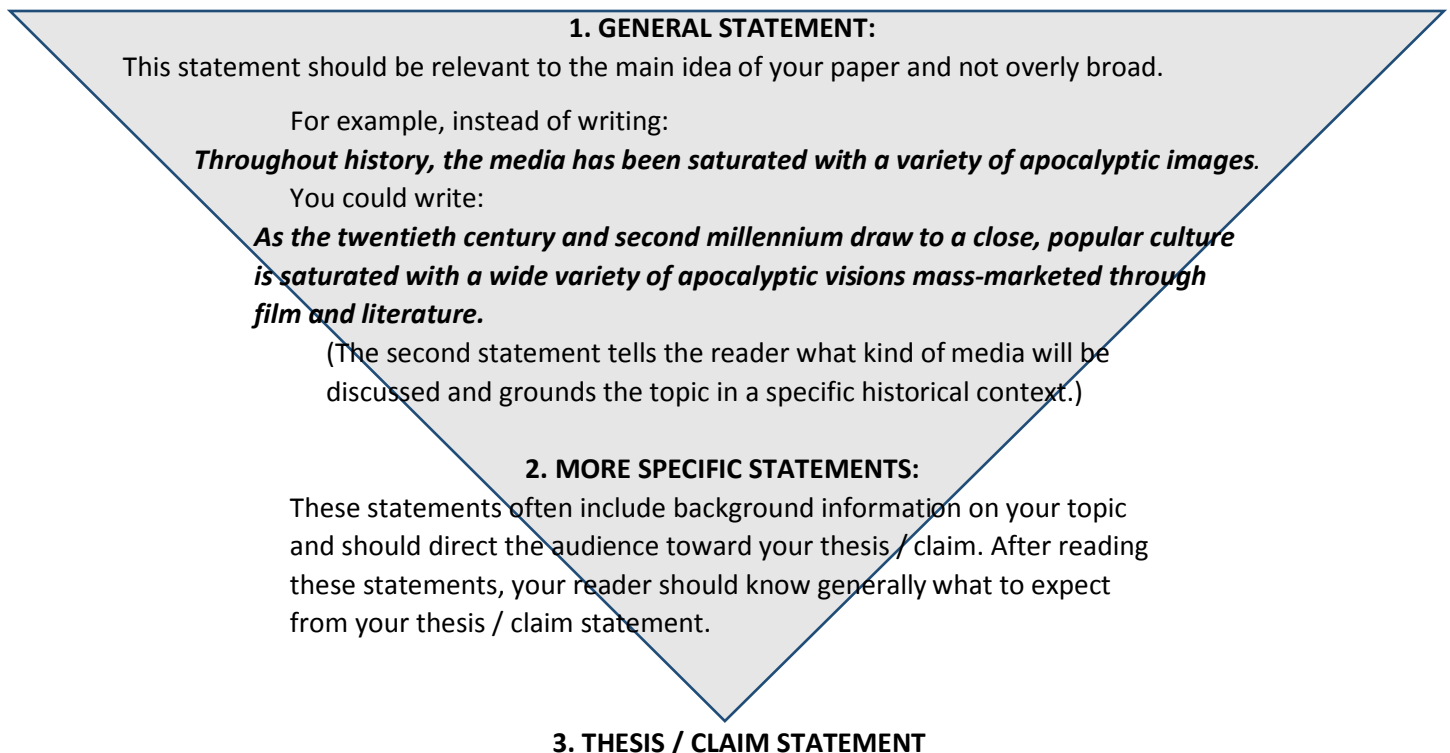
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/1/>

Writing Introductions

The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper. This impression is especially important when the audience you are trying to reach (your instructor) will be grading your work. (UNC Writing Center)

The Inverted Pyramid: A Model for Effective Introductions

A good introduction not only gives your thesis / claim statement and the appropriate background information on your topic, but also grabs your readers' attention and draws them into the rest of your paper. Here is one way to organize an introduction.



Things to avoid in an introduction: (The Center for Writing and Speaking)

- **Including too much detail.** If you tell your audience everything that you have to say in your paper in the introduction, then why should they bother to read the rest of it? Present the thesis / claim that you will discuss further in the paper, but do not try to prove it in the introduction.
- **Straying too far off topic.** It is important for your reader to have some background on your topic, but this information must be appropriate to your thesis / claim. Get to the point as soon as possible, without rambling about irrelevant issues. Present only the most relevant background information in the introduction.
- **Quoting dictionaries.** We all have read papers that begin “According to Webster’s Dictionary....” While it is important for you as a writer to formulate your own definitions within your paper, this trite opening is a sure way to put your reader to sleep.